

Moving Forward through His Love and Grace

Joan E. Gettry

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Moving Forward through His Love and Grace is a collection of Christian poetry demonstrating unshakable belief.

Joan E. Gettry's faith-based poetry collection *Moving Forward through His Love and Grace* celebrates a personal relationship with Christian spirituality and dispenses advice for navigating difficult times.

Christianity's supernatural realm dominates the book. Eternal human questions like "What are we anyways? / Clay and dust...?" are raised but dismissed as irrelevant; here, what's most important is that people return to their maker. Indeed, reassurance regarding God's love and the promised reward of a heavenly afterlife abounds. Still, these poems exist most as an expression of personal spirituality; many are direct addresses to God, and a few speak to loved ones who have passed away.

Ecstatic language centers the book; its entries work to embody the power of a personal relationship with God and the pleasure of being commanded by God. An overreliance on boilerplate phrases, including "a thief in the night," "fair and square," and "life's journey," however, undercuts the book's delivery, bringing it down to earth and a focus on pedestrian concerns. Missing commas and periods, grammatical errors, agreement errors, and confusion between words and phrases (including "maybe" and "may be") also interrupt the book's flow.

Elsewhere, there are efforts to personify abstract concepts, including the human mind and the human soul. But these personifications falter; the surrounding language is too vague. In a similar vein, hazy situations that begin with hints of meaning expire in further formlessness; a poem that recommends careful looks back on one's past notes, "We strive to emulate someone / Or some things that represent standards." Such fuzziness with details suggests that the poems are internal exercises; their accessibility to outside audiences is limited.

Still, some fresh, clear images do appear, including one of raindrops falling like toy soldiers. But these inclusions are sporadic at best—the exception, rather than the rule, within the poems. Musical and lyrical elements are likewise rare; they appear via techniques like repetition that add brief but powerful cadences, as with the early line "God in me is Life, God in me is Love / God in me is Persistence." Delicate beauty is better and more consistently emphasized in the book's elegant typeface and design: each page includes the stylized image of meadow grasses at its bottom.

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MICHELE SHARPE (December 21, 2023)

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